

Round Table:

GESTURE AND PERFORMANCE IN BYZANTIUM

Convener: **Michael Grünbart**

Tatiana Bardashova,
Imperial Coronation in the Empire of Trebizond (1204-1461)

Leslie Brubaker,
Gender and Gesture

Galina Fingarova,
The Hand is Word: The Gesture of the Sign of the Cross in Byzantine Iconography

Dominik Heher,
Performances of Humiliation: Mock Parades in Byzantium

Cecily Hilsdale

Marina Loukaki,
Le langage du corps dans la narration de l'histoire par Jean Kinnamos

Apostolos G. Mantas,
The Victorious Emperor and the Vanquished Barbarian:
Gestures of Triumph from Roman to Early Christian and Byzantine Art

Lutz Rickelt,
How to Rule with Undefiled Hands: the Performance of Imperial Repentance

Paraskevi Sykopetritou,
Gesture and Performance in Late Byzantium through the Eyes of George Pachymeres,
Michael VIII Palaiologos' Post-Coronation Procession of 1258 in Nicaea
and Its Political and Ideological Ramifications

Joanita Vroom,
Depictions of Human Figures and Bodily Postures on Medieval Ceramics



Michael Grünbart

Introduction

The aim of this round table is to bring scholars from different areas together in order to discuss directions and approaches to gesture and performance in the Byzantine world. In comparison to Western medieval studies investigating body language and nonverbal communication still remains a neglected field of research in Byzantine studies, although pictorial and written sources provide a variety of descriptions and patterns of interaction from all strata of Byzantine society.

Aspects of representing power (e.g. the appearance of high officials, the emperor and the patriarch in public), performances at court, the aurality of Byzantine culture (including aspects of voice and music), performing rhetoric in public (including the question of public space and auditorium), normative texts on gesture, the setting of performances (including architectural constructions), depictions of gesture (in manuscripts and objects of daily life, especially ceramics) and last not least issues of gender will be taken into consideration.



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Imperial Coronation in the Empire of Trebizond (1204-1461)

The Empire of Trebizond was one of the three successor states, called 'empires in exile' (in conjunction with the Empire of Nicaea and the Despotate of Epirus), after the fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire as a consequence of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The emperors of Trebizond were from the family of the Grand Komnenoi, who traced their lineage directly back to the famed Komnenian dynasty and who, amid the increasingly dynastic nature of imperial authority throughout the Byzantine world, saw themselves as the only legitimate heirs to the Byzantine Empire. Trapezuntine rulers used an official title of the Byzantine emperors and called themselves 'Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans'. Only in 1282, when the emperor of Trebizond John II married Theodora Palaiologina, daughter of Michael VIII Palaiologos, the Trapezuntine rulers officially relinquished their rights to the throne of Constantinople and the title of 'Emperor of the Romans'. However, they adopted the title of emperor in a modified form—'Emperor and Autocrat of all the East, the Iberians, and the Perateia'—although, according to the official ideology of Byzantium, only a ruler whose permanent place of residence was in Constantinople could possess the title of emperor. Therefore, the act of coronation most likely had a special significance for Trapezuntine rulers as a confirmation of their legitimacy as emperors and a demonstration of their power.

There are only limited sources that provide information on imperial coronations in Trebizond. The available evidence showing that coronation did not take place in Hagia Sophia of Trebizond, a church symbolically associated with the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople, which was the coronation church in Byzantium, but instead was carried out in two other churches in Trebizond that had a particular significance: the Church of Panagia Chrysokephalos and the Church of Saint Eugenios.

The Church of Panagia Chrysokephalos or 'Golden-Headed' today known as the Fatih Mosque and is located in the center of the historic Middle City of Trebizond. The Church of Chrysokephalos was originally built as a basilica. It was the cathedral of the city, which was converted also into a court church with coronation and funerary functions during the Grand Komnenoi Dynasty. Anthony Bryer states that the adaptation can probably be dated to the period between 1223 and 1235. There were all the necessary elements needed for the liturgical part of a coronation performance: a metatorion chamber for the robing of the emperor, an ambo in the center of the naos for the coronation performance itself and galleries for the display of the newly crowned emperor.

Michael Panaretos, a court official of the Emperor of Trebizond Alexios III, recorded in his 'Chronicle' that the coronation of Emperor John III took place in the Church of Chrysokephalos. He informs us that John III was crowned "on the 9th of September (1342) in the Chrysokephalos on the ambo" (Michael Panaretos, ed. Lampsides, 67.10-11), a platform standing directly in front of the altar in a church. It is worth noting the special significance of the ambo for the ceremony of imperial coronation in Byzantine Empire, as the point where the culminating actions of the coronation performance (such as the Eucharist, the ritual placement of a crown on the head of a new emperor by the Patriarch (or by the Metropolitan in Trebizond), the anointing ritual, and etc.) took place.

The other coronation church in Trebizond was the Church of Saint Eugenios, the patron and primary protector of Trebizond. Today, this church stands as the Yeni Cuma Mosque and is located about 200 meters east of the citadel on Boztepe Hill, separated from the citadel by a low ravine. In all likelihood, the basilica was rebuilt in 1291, as is stated in two lost inscriptions on the marble floor, and at least twice after this date. Because of its location outside the walls, it was often taken into possession by enemies of Trebizond. As a result, the church was damaged and rebuilt. It is thus unclear whether these renovations installed new coronation functions in the church or whether the functions were connected with the restoration of the church after considerable damage.

We know from Panaretos that Emperor Alexios III "was crowned in the Church of Saint Eugenios, on the 21st of January (1350), that is, Saint Eugenios's feast day" (Panaretos, ed. Lampsides, 69.13-14) but did not give any more details about the coronation performance in the church. Concerning this subject, we know that Alexios III arrived in Trebizond from Constantinople on the 13th of December (1349). This means that his coronation took place more than a month after his arrival. The delay may have been due to the power struggle for the Trebizond throne or merely Alexios III's desire to be crowned on Saint Eugenios' feast day in the Church of Saint Eugenios and thereby acquire the symbolic blessing and sacred favor for his government from the primary saint in Trebizond.

Therefore, we have two locations for the coronation in Trebizond. Consequently, we can ask whether there was any competition between the Chrysokephalos and Saint Eugenios churches. It can be assumed that the personal preferences of each emperor may have played a central role in the determination of the coronation church. In my opinion, most imperial coronations took place in the Church of Chrysokephalos. I believe that the cathedral and court church were the preferred venues during the period of the Grand Komnenoi. Moreover, the Church of Saint Eugenios was smaller and topographically more difficult to access than the Church of Chrysokephalos.

Unfortunately, we do not have historical sources that detail the processional routes from the palace to any of the two coronation churches in Trebizond. Therefore, we can only hypothetically reconstruct the procession by studying the later literary descriptions of the city and analyzing the topography of modern Trebizond and materials of early studies and archeological excavations.

We can reconstruct the procession route to the Chrysokephalos in the following way. The emperor left the palace on the west side of the citadel and went to the Chrysokephalos with his followers on a street that, according to John Eugenikos, was long and uneven (Eugenikos, ed. Lampsides, 28.50-53). We do not know for certain the location of this street. Most likely, it does not correspond to the existing modern street. Conceivably, an original Byzantine street could lead from the gate of Saint George of the Limnians in the northeast corner of the citadel to the Chrysokephalos and the square located by the church. In this square (as well as probably in the square in front of the palace which was called Epiphania) the emperor could have been greeted by the Metropolitan, nobles and other people from Trebizond.

The reconstruction of the processional route to the Church of Saint Eugenios is more problematic today. Presumably, from the beginning of their way to the Church of Saint Eugenios, the emperors of Trebizond used the above-mentioned street, which led from the citadel to the Chrysokephalos. When the procession arrived at the cathedral, it could turn to the right and leave the Middle City across a bridge. After that, the emperor and his followers had to climb Boztepe Hill,

where the Church of Saint Eugenios is located. We can imagine that this way was long and not easy to walk (probably, the emperor and his followers rode on horseback). Today, we can see one more gate on the east wall of the Middle City, which is closed to the gateway from the citadel (gate of Saint George of the Limnians). We could suppose that the emperors used this gate for their arrival to the Church of Saint Eugenios, however this gate can, with high probability, be dated to Ottoman times. In this case, it was not contemporaneous with Trapezuntine emperors and it could not have been used by them.

As we know, emperors in Constantinople were commonly crowned in Hagia Sophia from the seventh century onwards. The coronation route always proceeded from the Great Palace, which was extremely close to Hagia Sophia. We presume that during the rule of the Komnenian and Palaiologian Dynasties, either the main imperial residence was moved to the Palace of Blachernae (S. Runciman, F. Tinnefeld, A. Berger), or, in the opinion of others, the Palace of Blachernae was used as a ceremonial space in addition to the Great Palace (P. Magdalino, R. Macrides). Sources indicate that Byzantine emperors spent the night in the Great Palace before their coronation. This means that their way to the place of coronation was simple and very close compared to the route of the emperors of Trebizond.

It is important to discuss is whether the Trapezuntine emperors were blessed and anointed in the liturgical part of the coronation ritual in a church. The written sources do not mention this matter. However, we can surmise that if the Eucharist was a necessary part of the coronation at the time of the Komnenian Dynasty, it may have also been the case in Trebizond. Concerning the anointing, we do not know whether it was one component of the coronation performance in the Middle Byzantine period. If we accept that the anointing ritual was introduced during the Komnenian Dynasty, perhaps we can suppose that the Grand Komnenoi Dynasty could were also anointed. A copy of a portrait of the Trapezuntine emperor Manuel I was originally painted on one of the walls of the interior of the church of Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, but is now lost. The copy was made by Russian artist Grigorii Gagarin and published in a Russian issue at the end of the 19th century. On the image, we can see Emperor Manuel I holding a scepter in his left hand and something that Antony Eastmond has interpreted as a horn of anointing in his right hand. The portrait is very close to a description that was given by George Finlay in the middle of the 19th century. However, Finlay has not made references to a horn of anointing in the emperor's hand. Therefore, we need to be cautious in trusting Gagarin's picture completely and interpret it.

One important issue is whether the rulers of the Grand Komnenoi were raised on a shield during the coronation ceremony. It can be assumed that this act of coronation was not accepted in Trebizond. First, written sources do not describe it; however, they probably would refer to an emperor being raised on a shield if it had happened because of the particularity of this rite. Second, in all probability, the famous ancestors from the Komnenian Dynasty did not have this kind of performance during coronation. As we know, the ceremony of raising the emperor on a shield was renewed in the Empire of Nicaea by Emperor Theodoros Laskaris and was accepted by Palaiologen after the recapture of Constantinople in 1261; however, it is possible that this rite did not become a permanent part of the coronation performance in Byzantium.

There is an interesting account of the coronation of an empress in Trebizond. Panaretos wrote that an Iberian princess, the daughter of Georgian King David IX, was crowned as the Empress of Trebizond on the 5th of September 1377, and married Manuel III, the son of a co-emperor of

Alexios III, the next day, that is, on the 6th of September (Panaretos, ed. Lampsides, 78.27-33). The ceremonies of both the coronation and the wedding were held on the prokypsis, a richly decorated platform, which was always constructed for an emperor and his family specifically for different ceremonies on the squares. Panaretos did not elaborate on the exact placement of this prokypsis. Therefore, the square in front of the Church of Chrysokephalos, that in front of the Church of Saint Eugenios, the Epiphania square in front of the palace, or the main commercial square in Trebizond, known as the Meydan, are all possible locations for the prokypsis. In my opinion, the prokypsis for the coronation of the empress could have been constructed in the square in front of the main coronation church in Trebizond, Chrysokephalos, or, on certain occasions, in the square in front of the Church of Saint Eugenios, where, as we know, the coronation of Emperor Alexios III and probably the coronation of his wife Theodora Kantakouzena (we have information only about the wedding ceremony in the church) took place.

The Dossier of Pseudo-Kodinos, for instance, reports on the coronation of empresses in Byzantium. It asserts that "the crowned emperor does crown also his wife. If it should happen that the emperor is crowned already, the empress is crowned by her own husband, the emperor, in a similar fashion when he celebrates the wedding ritual, taking her as his wife" (Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Macrides, 226.1-4, 227.1-4). It must be noted that we do not see any examples of the coronation of a Byzantine empress on a prokypsis as in Trebizond in the available sources. In the early period of Byzantine history, a coronation performance was in the hall of the Great Palace, Augusteus, whereas in the middle and late Byzantine periods, the coronation of an empress took place in Hagia Sophia. Empresses were not crowned directly on the ambo (as the Byzantine emperors or co-emperors were) but near the ambo and altar in front of the Solea.

Thus, we can note not only similarities to Byzantium, such as the coronation of a Trapezuntine emperor on an ambo, but also some differences between the imperial coronations in Trebizond and Constantinople. We saw that the Trapezuntine emperors were not crowned in Hagia Sophia in Trebizond, but in one of two churches with particular significance: Chrysokephalos or Saint Eugenios. There were no straight, short, and even routes between the places of coronation, and we inferred that the route for the coronation of the emperor in Constantinople from the Great Palace to Hagia Sophia was not long, uneven, or especially difficult. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine grandiose ceremonial processions for the coronation places, similar to the ones in Constantinople, from the palace to one of the two coronation churches in Trebizond. Furthermore, we can assume that possible meeting places between the emperors of Trebizond and the people were limited and that the major formalities of the coronation performance took place in one of the two churches and its square. It is also clear that it would have been almost impossible for the emperors of Trebizond to copy Byzantine ceremonies completely, in particular the imperial coronations. They could re-enact only some parts of it. The main difficulty in copying was the vastly different topographies of Trebizond and Constantinople.



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Gender and Gesture

The Byzantines expressed hierarchies of status visually, and gesture was an important component of how hierarchies were articulated both in daily life and in images. Gender also played a role in the construction of hierarchies, though this role was inflected by social status. The relationship between gender and gesture is not, however, well understood. What follows is the result of an evaluation of a sequence of Byzantine images to explore the correlation between gender and gesture in the middle Byzantine period, and to consider how visual representation insects with social construction, as viewed through the twin lenses of gender and gesture.

The first thing to note is that a third factor is critically important: status. In imperial portraiture the rules are modulated by imperial ideals that are distinctly different from the rules that apply to ordinary people. It is the imperial masculine ideal to appear in public like an immobile statue, an ideal famously expressed by Ammianus Marcellinus, talking about the emperor Constantius visiting Rome in 357, and that this ideal continued is clear from Michael Psellos's admiring words about Isaak Komnenos. In formal imperial portraiture, the emperor is pictured as static, usually frontal, and self-enclosed; the empress, in contrast, shows relatively more movement, is often shown in three-quarter view, and is rarely self-enclosed.

Non-imperial representations of men and women are also inflected by gender conventions, but in different ways. Women are normally segregated, and secondary; they are passive rather than active participants in the scene. Men gesture in speech; women are self-enclosed and their lack of gesticulation indicates their silence. This is not the frontal passivity that suggests statuesque authority in imperial males; this is the obliquely turned, with bowed head, passivity that suggests subservience.

And then there is the dance of Miriam, which often accompanies images celebrating the Israelites' safe passage across the Red Sea. Miriam is a whirl of activity, with arms thrown high as she plays her castanets. As Mati Meyer has demonstrated, this motif was borrowed early on more or less verbatim from *maenad* figures on pre-Christian sacrcophagi, and then repeated *ad infinitum*, with little variation across the entire Middle Byzantine period. It cannot be assumed to bear any resemblance to actual Byzantine women (who were expressly forbidden to dance, in any case, by various church councils, beginning with the Council in Trullo of 691/2). But the motif persists, and provides one of the few examples of active female gesturing in Byzantine imagery. It functions as a kind of transgressive 'other', rather like the women who dress as men to enter male monasteries so beloved of early Byzantine hagiographers: i.e. women were actually not permitted to do this, but this is the visual story that one woman is allowed to perform to ensure that no one else does.

In sum: There is a set of imperial gestures that are heavily gendered, and that are different from the gestures visualised for ordinary people: status is an important component of the gesture/gender interface.

For ordinary people, the gestures visualised in Early and Middle Byzantine imagery (Late Byzantine material is more varied) reinforce, and are reinforced by, literary conventions portraying women as secondary, passive and, occasionally, publically emotional. There are some exceptional women visually, just as there are textually, and these have the effect of emphasising how women should behave by visualising how they should not. The gendered rhetoric of gesture in images is, rather surprisingly to me, remarkably similar to the gendered rhetoric of words. What the images do is add the dimension of gesture – of corporeality – to the conventions expressed in words. They literally embody the social construction of Byzantine gender.



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The Hand is Word: The Gesture of the Sign of the Cross in Byzantine Iconography

One of the most widespread gestures in the Christian world is the sign of the cross. There are two forms of this gesture that differ significantly: first, the act of "crossing oneself," which is when individuals make the sign of the cross upon themselves as a form of prayer and/or protection; and second, the act of "blessing," which the clergy make toward others or over objects. Both gestures surely have a common origin and are related to the Cross as a symbol representing Christ's victory over sin and death and His salvation of humankind.

While the cross as a symbol is widely represented in Byzantine art, the gesture of "crossing oneself" was never depicted. The act of "blessing," on the other hand, was shown by using the gesture for speaking known from the Roman tradition. Taking into consideration the theological and symbolic meanings of the sign of the cross as conveyed in written sources, the present paper aims to investigate the evidence from visual sources in order to explain the peculiarities of the imagery.



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Performances of humiliation: mock parades in Byzantium

Historians of Byzantine law have always (and correctly) stressed its Roman roots and its codified character. However, when it comes to the execution of judgments, both statements need some revision. For example, although Byzantine historiographical and hagiographical sources frequently mention mock parades that aimed at humiliating the wrongdoer, this kind of (often additional) punishment has been overlooked so far, an exception being two meticulous collections of incidences by Phaidon Koukoules which lack any analytical approach, though. Progress in ritual studies in the last two decades have shown that it is worth looking at such performances (despite the danger of being distorted by the written sources we have at our disposal) in order to get a better understanding of the culture that produces them.

Byzantine mock parades featured rough music, wild dancing and exposing the wrongdoer to the public in conditions as humiliating as possible. Their origins are not clear but their main features seem to have precedents in forms of vigilantism that can be traced back to Classical Greece. There, rough music and dancing had been part of traditional ran-tans (Charivaris) by which rural communities sanctioned social or sexual misbehavior like adultery. Independently from codified law, the youth of the village moved to the deviant's house, making rude gestures and noise to express their mockery. This apparent display of anarchy could also include some physical punishment but usually it ended with the reintegration of the wrongdoer. Also the other elements of Byzantine mock parades have antecedents in Greek Antiquity: the perversion of gender and social status by means of placing the deviant in a public space with improper clothing or leading them around on inappropriate mounts had been well-known in the Greek poleis too. The processional character of humiliation, finally, seems to have been inspired by the tradition of Roman triumphal parades which comprised also the display of booty and captives (although not being ridiculed by means of disguise).

It is not clear at what point in history official court ruling took over these customs since they find their way into codified law only in the 10th century and only in typical cases of codified customary law (book of the eparch, military law). In historiographical sources, first incidences can be seen in the 6th century when under the rule of Justinian I for example some pedophiles were paraded through Constantinople. The accentuation of public exposure of the wrongdoer would indeed correlate well with the noticeable shift from death penalty to various forms of mutilations which should make the wrongdoer's misdemeanor obvious to the public. A systematic analysis of earlier sources, however, might trace the application of mock parades by imperial courts even further back in time.

It is hard to establish what kind of crime exactly was sanctioned by mock parades. Among the examples we find pedophiles, adulterers and adulteresses, arsonists and prisoners of war, but most of all unsuccessful usurpers of the throne. In any case, the reported cases concern almost exclusively men. The outcome of the parades is individually different too. Sometimes the very humiliation was considered sufficiently satisfactory, whereas in other cases it was only an additional punishment before or after a penalty of mutilation or (very seldom) death.

Humiliation itself works almost exclusively on a level of symbolic communication, comprising in most cases visual signals. Identities could be perverted by means of dress: the convicted man or woman could be put on display nude or clad in rags to imply dissolution of their social status. Men, especially with military background, sometimes were forced to wear female clothing as a symbol of their effeminacy. Also an inappropriate mount could play on the loss of social status and prestige. Donkeys were the first choice. Having once been used to humiliate adulteresses in ancient Greece, it seems that donkeys initially were chosen for their phallic connotations (they also serve as mounts of Silen and other sartyrs). At some point, they must have lost this explicit sexual allusion and only kept their humiliating message. When clergymen or monks should be the aim of mockery, however, the use of a donkey as a mount could backfire, being understood as a kind of mimesis of Christ. Especially in these cases the perversion does not concern the mount itself but the position of the rider who was forced to sit backwards on the animal (a penalty which is, however, not confined to clerics).

Also the bodies of the convicts could be altered in order to make it the aim of ridicule. The most frequent strategy was to shave their heads and crop their beards, depriving them of important features of their male identity and annihilating their personality (at least for the moment). In more severe cases the humiliation was increased by physical mutilations (amputation of nose, ears or hands), although these were not performed during the parade but before.

The staging of the punishment as a whole, therefore, followed principles that are known from carnivalesque rituals of turning the world (with all its implications on gender and social status) upside-down for some time span recognized by both the community itself and political authorities. During the ritual of the mock parade the mob (as most Byzantine authors would say) was allowed and encouraged to deride the convicts regardless of their standing, even if they were usurpers from aristocratic houses.

In this context it is interesting to see, that emperors usually avoided to attend the parades personally. On the one hand, the emperor should not give himself to coarse mockery for reasons of dignity and on the other hand, any participation in this ritual of an inverted world could bear dangers to his office too. Therefore, the execution of the penalty was deliberately (but only apparently) ceded to the audience. That is why the staging took place exclusively in spaces traditionally dominated by the common people (hippodrome, mese) and did not include symbols or architecture of religious or imperial connotation.

The community itself should punish the wrongdoer who had put in danger the public order. To some extent, gestures and performances of disapproval and disdain can be obtained from written sources and depictions (of the mocking of Christ, e.g.).

Yet, the ancient customs of public reproachment were only exploited by official law and control was never given completely to the people. Only once, it seems, a parade resulted in lynch law: after being deposed, Andronikos I was tortured, deprived of one hand and one eye, shorn and led on a camel from the Blachernae-Palace to the Hippodrome. People did not only participate actively in his punishment during the parade by beating him but also carried out the execution themselves.

Usually, however, the organized staging of the event prevented an unexpected outcome. In this sense one could say that even the temporary state of apparent anarchy was nothing else than another proof of the functioning hierarchy of the state with the emperor at its head. From this point

of view, the audience simply served as an instrument for the execution of imperial will. More than that, the ritual of expelling a common enemy may have reinforced the bonds between the emperor and his people. The execution of Andronikos I is nothing but another piece of evidence for the lack of imperial authority in Constantinople after the death of Manuel Komnenos in 1180.

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Abstract

In *The Danger of Ritual Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, 2001), Philippe Buc argues that ritual as it is known from texts does not constitute the study of ritual itself. He insists that the ephemerality of ritual actions is not consolidated in texts in a self-evident or unbiased manner—that texts, in other words, always deploy ritual descriptions for their own textual agendas. Accordingly, Buc urges scholars to refrain from treating such textual descriptions as secondary traces of lost originary actions but instead as forceful articulations of their own textual politics. Buc's polemical work serves as inspiration for my paper, which extends his premise from ritual to gesture more broadly (although the contours between the two are far from distinct) and from textual discourse to a politics of the image. The reading of pictorial imagery in a documentary manner—that is, as straightforward evidence of ephemeral ritual gestures—risks nullifying the specificity of the imagery itself and its varied contexts. In recognizing this potential risk, my paper explores the relationship between the historical performance of ritual gestures as recounted textually and ritual gestures as representational strategies.

The body of the Palaiologan emperor serves as the analytic corpus for this endeavour. Taking as my point of departure the ceremonial gestures surrounding the first Palaiologan emperor's restoration of imperial authority to Constantinople in 1261, I wish to consider the relationship between gestures described in textual accounts and their later inflection in visual representations. Texts associate Michael VIII's staged entrance to the imperial city as a series of carefully orchestrated ritual gestures including the hallowed performance of the *adventus* combined with imperial *proskynesis*. George Akropolites' text (with a new edition and commentary by Ruth Macrides, Oxford, 2007), paints an especially vivid picture of the gestures of piety performed at this moment. While there are no corresponding visual representations of this historical performance, its gestural language is refracted in the altogether new imperial imagery of *proskynesis* in the early Palaiologan period. In addition to monumental imagery of imperial piety in Constantinople, new gold coinage disseminated the innovative gesture of imperial keeling far and wide.

Many scholars have explored the symbolism and political motivation of the emperor's public gesture of piety. Alongside the *adventus*, *proskynesis* ranks among the most discussed ritual gestures in Byzantium. It constitutes the ultimate gestural performance of piety, whether directed to the emperor by vanquished barbarians or to sacred figures by the emperor. Texts of an impressively diverse range of genres—from those associated with ceremonial protocol to historical narratives—help us contextualize this ritualized prostration. The imagery of such a symbolically pregnant gesture has been understood in ideological terms as an essential part of the construction of the imperial ideal (akin to how Gilbert Dagron, 1996/2003, read imperial ritual more generally). Building on the recent interest in gesture and performance, notably Leslie Brubaker as well as the other contributors to the 2009 volume of *Past & Present* dedicated to the politic of gesture, I wish to turn to the visual language of this gesture in order to historicize more deeply the visual idiom of imperial *proskynesis*

in relation to the ritual actions associated with the first Palaiologan emperor. To be clear, while *proskynesis* developed much earlier, in the later Byzantine period it became an integral part of the official imperial visual register for the first time. The earlier celebrated mosaic image of an emperor in *proskynesis* in the narthex of Hagia Sophia constitutes an isolated and idiosyncratic instance, whereas Palaiologan coinage disseminated the new kneeling imperial image serially. My paper focuses on the recalibration of the performance of this gesture and its mobilization in the visual sphere of the early Palaiologoi.

Another gestural performance that emerges in the later byzantine period as an integral part of the imperial ritual repertoire is the *prokypsis*. This imperial *tableau vivant*, described in detail in Pseudo-Kodinos (ed. Macrides, Munitiz, and Angelov, 2013), hinges on performed immobility rather than gestural motion. It is understood by Michael Jeffreys (1987), Henry Maguire (2009), Maria Parani (2013) and others to have developed earlier in the Komnenian period, but our sources are principally Palaiologan. As a coda to the discussion of *proskynesis*, the final part of my paper will consider how later Byzantine imperial portraits might be inflected by this Palaiologan codification of *prokypsis*.



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Le langage du corps dans la narration de l'histoire par Jean Kinnamos

Ces vingt dernières années, la recherche des plusieurs byzantinologues a mis en lumière le caractère littéraire des textes historiographiques des auteurs byzantins et elle a montré que l'écriture de nombreux historiographes byzantins – y compris ceux du XIIe siècle – présente une variété de traits qui permettraient de qualifier la narration de romancée (humour, ironie, satire, traits d'auto-parodie, hétéroglossie, etc.). De fait, les plus grands historiens du XIIe siècle, Anna Comnène, Jean Kinnamos, Nicétas Chionatès, avaient reçu, on le sait, une éducation classique poussée qu'implique une excellente formation rhétorique; d'où le grand art avec lequel ils intègrent à la narration historique des divers genres et figures de rhétorique, afin de conférer à leur récit la vraisemblance/crédibilité (πιθανότητα). Celle-ci, selon Aphthonios, est la qualité par excellence de la narration qui peut être obtenue, selon le commentaire de Jean de Sardes, entre autres, par l'impression morale (ἦθος), l'émotion (πάθος) et l'évidence (ἐνάργεια), qui met directement sous les yeux de l'auditeur ou du lecteur l'objet dont parle l'auteur. Et l'un des procédés qui contribue à donner au texte l'évidence et, partant, la «πιθανότητα», consiste à évoquer un certain nombre de détails corporels des personnages entrant dans le récit, en d'autres termes, de faire référence à la « langue du corps ».

Par langue du corps nous entendons, globalement l'ensemble des caractéristiques permanentes de l'apparence physique ainsi que les manifestations extérieures passagères du comportement d'un individu, susceptibles, que celui-ci en ait conscience ou non, de nous aider à mieux cerner son caractère, ses dispositions morales (ἦθος) ou ses sentiments (πάθος) et de s'ajouter à la communication verbale, voire de s'y substituer. Dans la communication orale bien sûr, la langue du corps en tant que vecteur de messages, peut ne revêtir qu'une importance marginale, voire ne jouer aucun rôle. Mais, s'agissant de la communication écrite, littéraire de surcroît, dans laquelle le texte sert d'intermédiaire pour permettre au lecteur d'accéder au sens et aux impressions, même si la langue du corps n'apparaît que de façon sporadique, jamais les références à des détails corporels ne sont « insignifiantes » ni fortuites. Il peut s'agir : 1. De traits physionomiques permanents, comme par exemple, la stature, la forme du visage, la couleur de la peau ou des cheveux ; 2. De descriptions des mouvements du corps et des réactions, spontanées ou contrôlées à un stimulus, comme par exemple des gestes, des regards, des sourires, des crispations, et en général des mimiques du visage, des altérations de la carnation, du timbre de la voix ; 3. De références à un contact physique, comme par exemple, accolades, embrassades, rapprochement fatal ; 4. De comportements dans l'espace ; par exemple, la façon dont l'empereur est assis, dont il paraît dans un lieu public. Autant d'éléments qui constituent un sous-ensemble du système de fonctionnement sémiologique d'un texte. La présence de ces signes corporels apparaît à des degrés divers et présente, bien sûr, des variations sensibles selon le genre dont relève le texte littéraire, mais procède d'un choix délibéré de l'auteur qui décide de les inclure dans sa narration et, dans de nombreux cas, de les imaginer ou carrément de les inventer.

Chaque époque, chaque lieu se forge son propre code de conduite sociale qui comporte des gestes codifiés, aussi bien dans le rituel de la vie quotidienne que dans le cérémonial officielle. Or, dans les sociétés médiévales, la gestuelle a une importance si grande que Jacques Le Goff définit très

justement la période du Moyen Âge occidental comme une « civilisation du geste ». Une définition qui, sans nul doute, s'applique également à l'Empire byzantin. Recenser des références à la langue du corps dans les textes de la littérature médiévale permet indubitablement de réunir un matériau précieux pour des observations sociologiques et politiques. Toutefois, cet aspect particulièrement intéressant ne nous a occupée que de façon marginale, lorsque l'auteur décrit des conduites codifiées de son temps qui, souvent, émettent un message politique. Ainsi, Kinnamos évoque la scène dans laquelle Manuel exhorte le chef turc Kilitz Arslan à s'asseoir en face de lui ; ce dernier commence par décliner son offre mais prend ensuite place sur un siège plus bas. À deux ou trois reprises, il décrit la scène où un chef étranger, seul ou accompagné de ses sujets, s'attache une corde au cou et se présente, tête nue et à pied, devant l'empereur byzantin, pour declarer sa soumission. Ou encore il dépeint l'impressionnant cortège triomphal et l'allure imposante de l'empereur. Ce qui nous intéresse davantage, c'est d'étudier à quels moments l'historien, Kinnamos en l'occurrence, quand il relate un événement historique, insiste sur la description de la conduite du coprs de ses héros. Choisit-il consciemment seulement certains personnages ? Sur quels éléments focalise-t-il plus systématiquement son attention, leur conférant ainsi une charge sémiologique plus grande dans le texte ? Une problématique qui devient plus intéressante encore lorsque notre auteur n'a pas été toujours le témoin oculaire de l'épisode. Ainsi, en partant des informations qu'il a à sa disposition, il restitue des scènes dans tous les détails, invente des mouvements et des comportements, en faisant plus ou moins appel à son imagination. Bref, il opère à la façon d'un auteur de fiction.

Ce n'est pas un hasard si nous avons choisi de nous attacher ici au texte de Kinnamos. Récemment, une de nos étudiantes, Eugénia Kontaxi, dans son mémoire de DEA déposé à l'université d'Athènes en 2013, s'est intéressée à la langue du corps dans l'*Alexiade* d'Anne Comnène, et en a recensé systématiquement toutes les occurrences dans le texte. Elle a rassemblé un matériau considérable. Une des conclusions qui s'est imposée d'elle-même est que la conduite non verbale des héros constitue un élément constitutif du programme d'Anne Comnène. Elle se rencontre dans une foule de situations, concerne indistinctement des hommes et des femmes, des amis et des adversaires de son père. L'historienne y recourt systématiquement quand elle veut décrire des caractères, des sentiments, des relations interpersonnelles. L'étude plus approfondie de ce matériel est actuellement en cours.

Le cas de Kinnamos est nettement différent. Quelques rares fois seulement, l'historien étoffe son récit de références à l'apparence extérieure, à la gestuelle, aux sentiments et aux humeurs des héros qui prennent part aux événements dont il fait le récit. On observe généralement que :

1. C'est Manuel qui se taille la part du lion dans plus de cinquante pour cent des cas.

1. Parmi les autres personnages byzantins dont il est question se détache une autre figure: celle d'Andronic Comnène. Exception faite peut-être de l'empereur Jean Comnène ; les autres personnages, dont des soldats anonymes, ne représentent que deux ou trois cas isolés.

1. Il y est fait allusion à des détails relatifs au comportement physique de princes étrangers : Raymond de Poitiers, Richard d'Andria, Roger II, Renaud de Châtillon, Baudouin III.

1. La présence de la figure de femme est minime.

Plus précisément :

Manuel, principalement au combat : monte à l'assaut, pointe sa lance et tue de nombreux ennemis (*τὸ δόρυ ἰθύνας κατ᾽ αὐτῶν ἵετο πολλούς τε δορατίσας εἰς γῆν ἔβαλλεν* ou *μιᾷ δόρατος προσβολῇ πεντεκαίδεκα τῶν πολεμίων εἰς γῆν ἔβαλλεν*) ; il dégaine son épée (*σπασάμενος τὸ ξίφος*) ;

il brandit le drapeau royal (*τὴν βασιλικὴν ἀνελόμενος σημαίαν*) ; par son armure et sa prestance imposante, il manifeste sa présence aux adversaires et ceux-ci, épouvantés, battent en retraite (*ἐκ τῆς ὁπλίσεως αὐτὸν κατανοήσαντες [χρυσῷ γὰρ κατακόρως ἀλήλιπτο πᾶσα] καὶ τῆς τοῦ σώματος δὲ ἀναδρομῆς τε καὶ εὐφυΐας τεκμηριωσάμενοι μάλιστα … νῶτα διδόναι οὐδαμῇ ᾐσχύνοντο*) ; d'une main, il tient un énorme et pesant bouclier et, de l'autre, manie les armes, en repoussant les volées de flèches ; il attache lui-même le bateau avec une corde et le tire (*θατέρᾳ μὲν χειρὶ ἀσπίδα εἵλετο, οὐ τῶν συνήθων δὴ τούτων οὐδὲ ἐξ ὧν σῶμα φράγνυται ἕν, εὐρεῖαν δὲ μάλιστα καὶ ἣν οὐδὲ κουφίσαι ἀνδρὶ ῥᾴδιον γίνεται, θατέρᾳ δὲ τὸ ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλικῆς συνήθως τεταμένον διήρους χειρισάμενος ἔπιπλον εὖ τε ξυναγαγών … , ἐπὶ τὴν ναῦν ἐφέρετο, καλῳδίοις τε οὕτω ξυνδήσας ἑλκύσαι τε ἐκεῖθεν αὐτὴν ἴσχυσε*) ; il entre à pied dans le cours d'eau impétueux et plein de vase et, d'un coup d'épaule, remet d'aplomb le bateau qui risquait de couler, corps et biens (*βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ ὕδωρ ἁλόμενος ἐπὶ πλεῖστόν τε πεζῇ προελθών, καίτοι τοῦ ῥεύματος σὺν ῥύμῃ σφοδρᾷ καταφερομένου καὶ τέλμα τι ἐνταῦθα δυσδιεξόδευτον ἐργαζομένου, τῷ ὤμῳ τε ὑπέσχε τῇ νηΐ*) ; il tire de son sein la liste de ses soldats (*ἐπικόλπιον εἶχε τόμον ἐξενεγκών*) ; il désigne de la main le difficile chemin à ses soldats (*τὴν ἀσυνήθη ἐκείνην, ὑποδείξας τῇ χειρί, καὶ ἄστειπτον ἰέναι*) ; son adversaire le frappe violemment au menton et, bien que les maillons de fer de son heaume s'enfoncent dans sa chair et le blessent, il tranche la main de son ennemi (*Βακχῖνος μὲν τῷ βασιλεῖ τῆς σιαγόνος τὸ ξίφος κατενεγκὼν ἔπληξεν, οὐ μὴν καὶ διελάσαι τὸ ἐκ τοῦ κράνους ἐπὶ τὰς ὄψεις ἠρτημένον ἠδυνήθη παραπέτασμα. οὕτω μέντοι ἰσχυρὰ ἡ πληγὴ γέγονεν, ὡς τοὺς κρίκους ἱκανῶς τῇ σαρκὶ ἐνιζήσαντας ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐκτυπωθῆναι. ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς χειρὸς τὸν βάρβαρον ἀφελόμενος τῷ ξίφει*). Il chasse, ou il joue au polo ; renversé et accablé sous le cops de son cheval, il est grièvement blessé; il est blessé aussi à la main lorsqu'il essaie de désarmer Andronic qui attaque son frère ; il soigne les blessures des autres, pratique des saignées. Il prend la parole en public à maintes reprises. Habituellement, le contenu de ses discours est retranscrit par Kinnamos sans la moindre allusion au timbre de sa voix, à son expression, à son attitude, ni à l'impression produite par ses paroles. D'une manière générale, les manifestations de ses sentiments, tout en étant évoquées, restent tout à fait marginales. L'empereur se réjouit, se met en colère, mais l'auteur ne nous décrit pas la façon dont se traduisent ces sentiments. À une exception près : lors de la mort de son père, l'empereur Jean Comnène ; Manuel incline la tête contre sa poitrine et verse d'abondantes larmes qui se répandent sur le sol (*κάτω νενευκὼς καὶ ἐπὶ στέρνα τὴν κεφαλὴν ῥίπτων δάκρυσι τὸ δάπεδον ἔπλυνε*). À noter que Kinnamos n'avait pas assisté à la scène. Apprenant que sa femme a accouché avant terme d'un enfant mâle mort-né, Manuel, si l'on en croit Kinnamos, maîtrise ses sentiments jusqu'à ce que la discussion sur le dogme prenne fin. Ensuite, il se met debout, s'agenouille devant les prêtres, leur parle – l'historien rapporte les paroles de l'empereur à la première personne – les implorant d'intercéder auprès de Dieu puis il se relève tandis que les prêtres, à genoux et les yeux pleins de larmes, adressent des supplications à Dieu, obéissant ainsi bien sûr à l'empereur. Bref, il ressort clairement de tous les passages cités que, s'agissant de Manuel, les manifestations du corps sont mentionnées et décrites de façon à renforcer son image héroïque et à le présenter comme un surhomme.

Aux antipodes de ce qui vaut pour Manuel, concernant la figure qui arrive en deuxième position après l'empereur sous la plume de Kinnamos, celle d'Andronic Comnène, les allusions aux manifestations corporelles contribuent essentiellement à donner de lui une image négative. Il injurie le sébastocrator Isaac, s'élance, épée en main, pour le décapiter, blesse l'empereur par erreur. Lorsqu'il tente d'assassiner l'empereur, il abandonne son cheval, se déguise, enfourche une mule,

met pied à terre et s'approche de la tente impériale, un couteau à la main. Mais il est repéré ; alors, il fléchit les genoux, faisant mine de déféquer ! (*ἐπὶ γόνυ κλιθεὶς τὸν τῆς γαστρὸς δῆθεν ἀποκρίνειν προσεποιεῖτο σκυβαλισμόν*). C'est surtout sa malignité que souligne Kinnamos, en décrivant par le menu ses mouvements et ses gestes, lors de son évasion très cinématographique des prisons de Constantinople (*ἐνταῦθα ἐκδραμὼν ἅτε λαγὼς ἐκρύψατο τὸ σῶμα συστείλας ἐπὶ βραχύ,* ou *«εἴ γε ἀφήσεις με» ἔφη «ἀπιέναι, αὕτη δή σοι παρ' ἐμοῦ χάρις ἔσται» καὶ ἅμα λέγων τὸ ἐπικόλπιον αὐτῷ ἐξαγαγὼν ἐδείκνυ φυλακτήριον*).

Princes étrangers, surtout latins.

Toutes les références à l'apparence des personnages contribuent à donner d'eux une image dépréciative. Bel homme à la prestance imposante (*κάλλους τε καὶ μεγέθους*), Raymond de Poitiers reçoit sur le crâne un rude coup frappé par un soldat byzantin ; il ne tombe pas par terre à la renverse, parce qu'il se cramponne des deux mains à la nuque de son cheval et que les gens de sa suite le soutiennent (*εἰ μὴ ἀμφοτέραις τοῦ ἱππείου ἐπιλαβόμενος αὐχένος ἐπέσχε τὸν ὄλισθον πλεῖστοί τε ἤδη τῶν ἑπομένων συνέστησαν, ὕπτιος ἂν παρ' αὐτὰ ἐξεκυλίσθη*). En 1134, Roger II, qui auparavant avait humilié le pape, le fait asseoir, tombe à genoux et se dirige vers lui en rampant à quatre pattes, pour lui demander soi-disant pardon et en même temps la dignité de roi (*καθίζει ἐπὶ ταύτης τὸν ἀρχιερέα, ἐς ἔδαφός τε καταβαλὼν ἑαυτὸν πρηνὴς χερσί τε καὶ ποσὶν ἐρειδόμενος προσῄει, τὸ μὲν τὴν ἁμαρτάδα δῆθεν ἐξιλασκόμενος τὸ δὲ καὶ ῥὴξ προβεβλῆσθαι ἀξιῶν*). La mort de Richard d'Andria à Trani en Apulie est hideuse. Un prêtre le frappe à la jambe avec une pierre. Il se tord de douleur. Deuxième coup, à la gorge cette fois. Il implore pitié. Son adversaire lui perfore le ventre d'un coup de couteau et le force à avaler ses viscères (*τις τῶν ἐκ Τράνεως εἰς τοὺς ἱερέας τελῶν μέγα τι χρῆμα λίθου ἐξ ὑπερδεξιῶν ἀφεὶς κνήμης τε θατέρας τυχήσας αὐτῷ, εἰς γῆν ἀναχθῆναι ἐποίησε. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἔκειτο σπαράττων ὑπὸ ὀδύνης ἑαυτόν, ὁ δὲ καὶ δευτέραν κατῆρε τοῦ τραχήλου βολήν. ἐπειδή τε ἤδη κατηγώνιστο, καίτοι τοῦτον πολλὰ ἱκετεύοντα ὕπτιον ἀνακλίνας ἐγχειρίδιον μὲν τῆς γαστρὸς* διελαύνει, ἔγκατα δὲ πάντα *ἐκχέας οἷόν τινα ἐδωδὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ στόματος παρέθετο*). Impitoyable mais hypocrite, Renauld de Châtillon, après avoir fait torturer l'archevêque de Chypre pour lui extorquer ses biens, l'exhibe sur son cheval, en vêtements d'apparat à travers toute la ville, tandis que lui-même marche à ses côtés, en tenant la bride. Beaudouin III, plein de morgue, descend de cheval à l'endroit où seul l'empereur peut mettre pied à terre.

Les allusions à l'apparence physique de personnages féminins sont quasiment inexistantes. De toute évidence, la présence des femmes en général ne retient guère l'intérêt de Kinnamos. Il évoque brièvement les symptômes de la maladie de Mélissanthé, promise à Manuel, qui fanent sa beauté (*κατακλιθεῖσα ἔφριττε τὸ σῶμα καὶ ἐκλονεῖτο ἐξαίσια, πυρετοί τε αὐτὴν μετεδέχοντο, καὶ ὑπωπιασμὸς ἤδη καὶ τηκεδὼν ἐπηκολούθει. καὶ τὸ τῆς ὄψεως ἄνθος χαρίέν τι μαρμαῖρον τὰ πρότερα ἠλλοιοῦτο κατὰ βραχὺ καὶ ἐστυγνοῦτο*). Il décrit également la conduite et la mort de deux prostituées. Au siège de Brindisi, une demi-folle qui erre dans les rues est frappée de paralysie quand une pierre lui brise le crâne. (*γύναιόν τι ἀνὰ τὴν πόλιν σοβοῦν κατὰ κορυφὴν δεξάμενον τὴν βολὴν τήν τε κεφαλὴν διεσπαράχθη καὶ πᾶσαν μελῶν παρελύθη τὴν ὄστωσιν*). Au siège de Zeugma, une femme grimpée sur les remparts, adresse des propos orduriers aux soldats romains, leur lance des cendres, relève ses jupes dans un geste obscène, et leur montre son derrière. Un soldat décoche contre elle une flèche qui la frappe à ses fesses. Telle est la pitoyable image de la femme que voient les soldats en entrant dans la ville (*γύναιόν τι εὕρετο δύστηνον διεληλαμένην ἀκίδα τῆς ἕδρας ἔχον. .. αὕτη, ὁπηνίκα ἔτι ἀνάλωτος ἦν ἡ πόλις, ὑπὲρ τῶν τειχέων ἑστῶσα σποδόν τε κατέσειε καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια κόσμῳ οὐδενὶ*

ἀνασύρασα τὴν ἕδραν παλιντρόπῳ τῷ προσώπῳ ἐς τὸν Ῥωμαίων ἐδείκνυε στρατόν, ἀπέραντόν τέ τινα βαττολογίαν ὑποψάλλουσα δαιμονιώδει τινὶ μαγγανείᾳ Ῥωμαίους ξυνδεῖν ᾤετο. ἀλλά τις στρατιωτῶν βέλος ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἀφεὶς κατατυχεῖ τῆς ταλαιπώρου, ἔνθα τὸν τοῦ σκυβαλισμοῦ παράπομπον ἡ φύσις αὐλῶνα ἵδρυσεν).

Pour conclure, nous voyons que Jean Kinnamos recourt entre autres à la sémiologie du corps pour mieux mettre en lumière la grandeur de l'empereur Manuel I, son objectif principal, de toute évidence, lorsqu'il entreprend de rédiger son histoire. L'impression extrêmement négative que suscite chez le lecteur la conduite corporelle des princes latins contribue encore à sublimer davantage Manuel. C'est du reste l'unique raison, il me semble, pour laquelle elle figure dans le récit. En fait, cela n'intéresse pas vraiment Kinnamos de décrire les caractères, de rendre compte de sentiments, d'expliquer des conduites pour interpréter le cours de l'histoire. Ce qui explique que nous ne rencontrions pas chez lui de références à la physionomie des personnes faisant plus ou moins écho à des traités physiognomoniques de l'Antiquité, comme celles que l'on rencontre dans l'*Alexiade* d'Anna Comnène – allure physique d'Alexis I, d'Irène Doukas, de Marie d'Alanie, de Jean Italikos et de bien d'autres encore. Kinnamos n'est assurément pas un observateur perspicace du comportement humain comme Nicétas Choniatès qui, très souvent avec une grande justesse et un souci du détail, décrit les gestes de chacun des héros principaux de son récit, surtout quand il veut ironiser sur les défauts d'un personnage, voire les tourner en ridicule (par exemple de Jean Poutzès [p. 57] ou de Jean Camatéros [p. 113-115]).



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The Victorious Emperor and the Vanquished Barbarian: Gestures of Triumph from Roman to Early Christian and Byzantine Art

As a part of the conception and the content of a work of art, the gestures through which the dominance of the victor is visually rendered can serve to lay bare both his own triumph and the humiliation of his defeated enemy. The aim of the artistic product is of utmost importance, as it dictates the wider iconographical framework and other elements of the composition through which the viewer, by means of association, can admire the victor's authority or feel pity for the vanquished.

In depictions of victory and triumph in Roman imperial art, gestures always aim to project the grandeur of the conqueror. When Christian art adopts these scenes, it transforms them accordingly, as has already been shown by André Grabar, so they render the triumph of Christ and the new religion. A new content is given to representations of an imperial or a generally public nature, which Christian art utilized in order to signify the ultimate victory of a seemingly defeated person, usually of a martyr.

Representations in which the Roman emperor drags a captive by the hair are also included in the context of the visual rendering of his triumph. The subject, already known with variations from Egyptian and ancient Greek art, is introduced in official imperial iconography beginning with medallions of Constantine the Great. Either the emperor or a personification of Nike, are seen carrying out this action, as we can observe on coins dated up to the end of the 5th century. Subsequently, when Nike is substituted by angels, they are now seen dragging not the defeated barbarian, but the enemy of God, the impious.

The topic is found in four marginal psalters dated from the 2nd half of the 9th up to the late 11th century for the illustration of the Ode of Isaiah (26; 10). Later, from the 13th century onwards, it is used in the illumination of gospel books and in monumental art, as one of the scenes which visually render the parable of the Royal Wedding (Mt 22; 1-14). In the images mentioned above, the impious, who is depicted in various positions and can assume a different identity and insignia, is dragged by the hair by an angel. In depictions of the parable, an extra scene is often included which is also drawn from imperial triumphal iconography: one or more angels binding the impious' limbs.

The study of the relationship between text and image allows us to better understand the way a secular iconographical subject, a secular gesture, adopted by early Christian art, was transformed and further evolved later in Byzantium. Gestures of victory and imperial triumph, combined with gestures which serve to magnify the humiliation of the vanquished enemy, assume a different character in Christian art. Now, the idea of the victorious Christ or the triumphant Church, although in the background, is the necessary requirement for the creation not only of the works of art under examination, but also of others with a similar subject. However, the punishment of the enemy, who is now the impious, the unbeliever or the adversary of the right doctrine, and therefore the enemy of the Church, is now carried out by the angels, as, according to Christian vocabulary, God charges them with the punishment of His foes. In this way, the same or similar gestures, retaining their old symbolism and their old dynamics, are now placed in a new context within which the agents and the ideas have shifted.



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How to rule with undefiled hands: the performance of imperial repentance

This paper will take a look on the performance of imperial penance during the middle and late Byzantine period. I will focus on cases of individual repentance and not on actions that the emperor performed together with the citizens for collective sins, as it was the case during public processions of penance. In these, the monarchs presented themselves as part of a community pleading for forgiveness, as ideal rulers who initiated the necessary actions and led them on personally. These performances served to create communal identity and affirmed visibly the authority of the emperors over this very community (Diefenbach 1996, Meier 2002). In contrast, personal transgressions against prevailing norms could turn out quite problematic, as they separated the monarch from the community that was defined by its commitment to these norms. Accusations of individual sins could therefore disunite the emperor from those groups of society that were indispensible for the acceptance of his claim to rule. How, then, could he achieve purification – and, perhaps, under what circumstances might an emperor fail to achieve it? What did the emperors do, and whom did they address (the audience being a very important part of any performance)?

The well known penance of Leon VI is described in great detail by the anonymous author of the Vita Euthymii. Therefore it is convenient to use this description as a starting point of possible actions that the emperor could perform to demonstrate his sincere repentance. The Vita makes it clear that Leon was very aware that penance for his fourth marriage was unavoidable, and was ready to accept any penal obligations that might be imposed upon him by the Church. But the patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos changed his mind and did not receive him into the Hagia Sophia, what he had promised, and so prevented the emperor from starting his penance proper. The second time this happened, Leon cast himself on the ground in front of the Patriarch in the Narthex of the Hagia Sophia, and confessed his sin in public. The author of the Vita describes this performances expressly as royally, following a pattern established already by Ambrosius in his dealings with Theodosios I. Leon clearly intended not only to imitate Theodosios, but also the biblical model of David, typus of the humble, penitent ruler (Dagron 1996). By acting thus the emperor did not merely plead meekly for forgiveness – his act was a strong request to receive what David had from Nathan, and Theodosios from Ambrosius: Leon demanded to be treated like these royal examples. Nor did he only address the patriarch: The strongest obstacles to his request for penance were prominent members of the synod, who were probably present at the occasion. All the time during the conflict, Leon was constantly in touch with the synod, trying to convince as many of its members as possible to grant him penance (Karlin-Hayter 1970). During a reception after his prostration he showed to them his little son Constantine, lamented his martial misfortunes, shed tears, and uttered penitential verses, thereby moving the hearers themselves to tears. According to the Vita Euthymii, he succeeded to convince at least some of the metropolitans to change sides and to support him against the patriarch. The last opponents were then exiled for a while, Nikolaos removed – and the elected new patriarch Euthymios could himself be seen as part of the imperial performance of repentance:

as *pater pneumatikos* of the emperor, he had special authority and responsibility concerning the spiritual welfare of his protégé. By choosing him as patriarch, Leon ensured that penance could not we denied to him again (though Euthymios objected the fourth marriage strongly). Moreover, the special authority of Euthymios in this matter would strengthen the potential acceptance of Leons repentance especially in the clergy. After his elevation, Euthymios and the synod (minus its exiled members, plus some legates of the Pope) granted the emperor's wish, imposed penal obligations and admitted him again into the Church. Leon had achieved his goal.

This narration of the *Vita Euthymii* illustrates very well the political dimensions of imperial penance. These were even more crucial when the emperor's sin was connected with his accession to the throne, especially in cases of usurpation, when the new ruler's acceptance was not yet firmly established. After Leon, most examples of imperial penance entail the purification of sins which were directly related to the seizure of power, especially to violent crimes in the course of usurpations; that is, to serious violations of legal or moral standards in the sensitive moment of a non-consensual change of ruler that could weaken the authority of the new emperor at the very beginning of his reign.

The first case in question is already the usurpation of Basil I, who in 867 became sole ruler of the Empire after Michael III had been violently murdered. Numerous sources attest the accusation that Basil had killed his mentor personally. The violent removal of an emperor in itself was neither unique nor spectacular; but his alleged assassination by the hand of his successor was. While there was never any official confession of Basil – in my opinion, the written statement about his sins read out at the council of 869/70 had nothing to do with it – there soon circulated stories that interpreted the foundation of the Nea Ekklesia as an act of penance. I don't want to dwell to deep on this here, as it doesn't provide much information about performance; but its is important to note that in the discourse regarding the homicide charge against Basil a view prevailed gradually that it had to be responded to not by denial, but by a sign of repentance. This view was even alluded to, although only very carefully, by the historian known as Genesios, who had been commissioned by Constantine VII. He maintains that Basil had no share in the bloody deed, but continues that he had built the Nea Ekklesia to thank God for the personal benefit he had drawn from it, and was only crowned after the Church had been completed. Doing this, so Genesios, he gave a new and fresh start to his government (Genes. hist. IV 29). The false chronology of this report is evident because the Nea was consecrated only in 881. It seems to me that Genesios refers to the interpretation of the foundation of the church as an act of repentance, which preceded the coronation of Basil as sole ruler and thus the actual start of his autocracy: Basil begins his reign pure. It is probably no coincidence that the next case triggered an outright demand for purification before the coronation.

That case concerns John I Tzimiskes, who came to power in the year 969 by a conspiracy that he instigated with Theophano, empress and wife of the previous emperor Nikephoros Phokas (see Lilie 2007, 2011). Tzimiskes also was confronted with the charge that he had killed his predecessor with his own hands. As he hurried to the Hagia Sophia the morning after the coup, in order to obtain the imperial crown by patriarch Polyeuctus, he was denied entrance to the church: Only after he had shown repentance for the murder he would be allowed back into the house of the lord (Scylitzes, Ioh. Tzim. 2). But Tzimiskes did not repent: He only agreed to execute two other alleged murderers he had named and to exile Theophano, on whom he shifted all the blame. Polyeuktos relented and crowned Tzimiskes at Christmas Eve. But while the Patriarch showed himself satisfied, the synod was not. It demanded a justification why Tzimiskes had been crowned without having repented.

Polyeuctos answered with the famous quotation, found in the works of Theodoros Balsamon, that when Tzimiskes was anointed emperor, his sin had been erased completely, just as baptism washes away all previous transgressions (Rhalles – Potles III, S. 44). We observe that the synod was obviously not content with a mere protestation of innocence. It expected more, a credible demonstration of remorse, that is, a public performance of repentance. Without it, the reign of Tzmiskes would start tainted. Accordingly, the Patriarch stressed in his statement that the opposite was true: the imperial coronation itself had already ensured the purification of the new emperor. While it seems to have been accepted then, this view did not prevail in the future.

After the death of Constantine VIII, the last male representatives of the Macedonian dynasty in 1028, a number of questionable imperial marriages took place that where highly criticized by contemporaries (Kalavrezou 1994, 1997; Laiou 1992). Probably the worst of these was the marriage of the empress Zoe with Michael (IV) Paphlagon. It was scandalized by rumors of an illegitimate affair while Zoe was still married to Romanos III, rumors that Michael tried to silence by an oath that was generally regarded as false. Added to that came he suspicion that the death of Romanos in 1034 had been effected by the adulterous couple. But the patriarch Alexios Studites crowned Michael without demur and married him to Zoe. Therefore several suspicions were left unanswered: adultery, perjury and plotting murder, each in itself enough to dispute Michael's marriage and his claim to power. That Michael suffered from public seizures of epilepsy was also not helpful. His critics interpreted the disease as a demonic possession that God had inflicted upon him to execute his wrath (reminiscent of David's adversary and predecessor, King Saul). So what did Michael do to purify himself? If we believe Michael Psellos, the new *basileus* was well aware of his serious misconduct. He started to refrain from any debauchery and of marital intercourse in order to atone for what he had done for the sake of power. When his epilepsy was joined by dropsy, he reacted with fastings and purifications and donated a monastery to the holy physicians Kosmas and Damian (the Hagioi Anargyroi). He practiced asceticism, invited lepers and washed their feet with his own hands, gave charitable contributions to other monasteries, and so on. Several times he went to the shrine of Demetrios in Thessaloniki to benefit from the healing power of its effluent myron; the fight against sin and the disease, understood as corporal punishment, went hand in hand. Furthermore, he asked holy men to pronounce penal obligations that would assure divine forgiveness. They refused to do so as long as Michael had not repented his sins in public. In the history by John Skylitzes it is even postulated that Michael could only be forgiven if he renounced the purple, repudiated the adulteress Zoe and mourned his sins all by himself. This extreme view is certainly related to the fact that Michael finally did exactly that: Shortly before he died he entered the convent he had founded, refused to receive Zoe and eventually died "doing penance and confessing his sin against Romanos, weeping". The final judgment of Skylitzes is relatively mild: Apart from the crimes against Romanos Michael had been a decent, good and pious man.

As Tzimiskes, Michael for obvious reasons did not confess or perform public repentance for his alleged sins. He was not demanded to so by the patriarch, and later tried only indirectly, though quite desperately, to purify himself by pious acts. He might have considered to follow the example of Tzimiskes, blame Zoe as the culprit and banish her. Personal feelings aside, this approach was not at all feasible because of the extraordinary position Zoe held, together with her popularity. This assumption is confirmed by the fate of his successor Michael V. Kalaphates. When he exiled Zoe he provoked unrest in the population, which defied the expulsion of the legitimate empress. By

cutting his dynastic bonds, Michael V. became an ordinary usurper and was thus violently removed from power. Michael IV was more prudent, but that restricted himself to very limited options to cleanse himself from sin. The only alternative left were public demonstrations of humble piety that did entail neither confession nor absolution. In this way he succeeded indeed, it seems, to convince the audience of his personal piety, but not to achieve the forgiveness of his sins and full acceptance as emperor. Only his abdication from office was perceived as a sufficient sign of remorse. It is of course unquestionable that this rather harsh judgment was to a very high degree influenced by his stigmatizing epilepsy.

In 1081 Alexios Komnenos rebelled against the reigning emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates. On the first of April his army captured Constantinople after a short siege and the city was plundered extensively, even churches were not spared. The daughter of the new ruler, Anna Komnene, does not deny the consequences of the violent conquest in the history of her fathers reign. But according to her, he immediately repented: Alexios feared that the sufferings of the City inflicted by his soldiers could have caused God's wrath so that he might share the fate of Saul, who lost rule and life because of his transgressions. Although Anna makes it clear that Alexios was not to blame personally for what had happened, he humbly confessed before the patriarch and the synod shortly after his coronation. They imposed on him and his relatives to fast for forty days, during which they had to sleep on the bare floor, which was accepted. Anna commends the subsequent actions of the imperial family in highest terms, explaining to her audience that the tears shed and the wailing in the palace were not blameworthy or signs of inner weakness, but praiseworthy und producing eternal joy. Her father even went beyond what was imposed by wearing a sackcloth beneath the purple during these forty days and nights. She glorifies him as an exemplary Christian who surpasses even his relatives, and stresses that Alexios himself recognized the need for repentance, which he regarded as a prerequisite for a successful reign. After the time of penance had passed, Anna assures her audience, Alexios seized the management of the imperial affairs with undefiled hands (Alexias III 5.1-6).

Undoubtedly the sack of Constantinople by the ragtag army of Alexios, for the most part consisting of foreign mercenaries, left a mark on its population: It was the very first pillage that is recorded in the history of the city. That the reputation of the usurper suffered accordingly is certain, as well that he perceived this as a potential threat to his claim to power. The importance that he assigned to his public repentance is evident: Anna claims that his proper rule started only when his penance was fulfilled, his previous acclamation and coronation are thereby marginalized. The key message of her story is that her father's reign began undefiled: Only when he's purified he allows his skin to touch the purple robe. Although there are indications that the patriarch and the synod had more influence in the matter than Anna suggests, it is important to note that she claimed the initiative to act for Alexios alone. She presents him as a conscientious monarch who is very well aware of his responsibilities and submits to the judgment of spiritual authorities. Anna's presentation thus reflects an embellished, official version of events issued by the imperial household. Even though the penance took place in the palace, we can be sure that the emperor ensured that its audience – in this case mainly the population of Constantinople – would learn about it and get its message: Alexios appeared as a pious man who aspired to set right the wrongs caused by his army only afterwards took the reins with immaculate hands.

Last in line is Michael VIII Palaiologos, whose attempts to achieve purification, together with the accompanying political power struggle, are even better documented than Leons, in the history

of Georgios Pachymeres. He had been excommunicated by the patriarch Arsenios for breaking his many oaths of loyalty to the imperial house of Laskaris after he blinded and exiled the legitimate child-emperor John IV Laskaris, whose guardian he was and by whom he had been elevated to co-emperorship. The reports of Pachymeres allow us to discern different phases of the conflict between emperor and patriarch. These were characterized by the different approaches Michael undertook in order to persuade the church to lift the ban. Again, Pachymeres makes it clear that Michael knew he had to make amends, that indeed he judged penance as a rather convenient instrument to cleanse himself: He apparently expected from the patriarch to pronounce penal obligations whose fulfillment would guarantee his eventual rehabilitation. But to his surprise and dismay, Arsenios refused to do so. The patriarch strove to preserve the rights of John Laskaris, and indicated to Michael that he would only lift the ban if Michael abdicated from the power he had usurped illegally. First, the emperor tried to persuade Arsenios by sending envoys and mediators; after that did not do, he visited him in person several times and pleaded for forgiveness by throwing himself on the ground, doing this, as Pachymeres stresses, in front of many witnesses. As in the case of Leon we might presume that by showing his remorse he also intended to communicate that it was his right to be granted penance. Michael repeated his visits to Arsenios several times probably not because he really hoped that he could change his mind, but rather because he wanted to demonstrate that he had done all what could be expected of a sinner, whereas the patriarch refused to do what was his duty: to help a remorseful transgressor back into the church by granting him penance. The addressees of this message were not only the patriarch, but also the synod and the population of the capital (of course, Michael might also hope to reconcile the adherents of the Laskarids). When the patriarch did not budge, Michael did not pursue the matter further for some time – though Pachymeres tells us that he conferred with bishops of the synod about his case, showing that he, like Leon, was working hard to win the support of its members, which was crucial if he wanted to act against Arsenios. The final straw was a public confrontation at the entrance to the Hagia Sophia after Michael had returned from a military campaign and wanted to offer thanksgivings to god. When he approached the church, Arsenios denied him the entrance to the building and sent him away, while the senate, the synod (as well as the patriarchs of Alexandria and Antiochia) and a crowd of people were witnessing the scene. As Michael would have known that he could not enter the Church in the ceremonial way he intended (though he was allowed to venerate the icons before the start of the liturgy), I think it likely that he acted thus to provoke the patriarch to demonstrate yet again in public that he was uncompromising. Now Michael felt secure enough to put formal charges against the patriarch: transgression of his competences, subverting the empire, breach of ecclesiastical rules, disregard of the divine will. The emperor presented the patriarch as a dangerous deviant who flouted not only valid law, but also disrespected the limits his office and acted in an unacceptable, alien manner that endangered the stability and welfare of the empire. The synod consented to dispose Arsenios, and he was finally removed. After his successor Germanos III proved himself ineffectual, Michael installed his *pater pneumatikos* as patriarch, another parallel with Leon VI. The ban was finally lifted in a sumptuous ritual in the Church of Blachernae on the feastday of Hypapante that left nothing to chance (the time of preparation had been used to present Michael as a New David on several occasions, explicitly also regarding his penance, see Angelov 2006). Present were, according to Pachymeres (IV 25), the synod, the senate, citizens of Constantinople and an imperial entourage of palace dignitaries and (probably) military officers. The ritual took place after the liturgy and was carefully staged: The bishops arranged themselves inside the sanctuary along its

railing, while the patriarch (Josephos Galesiotes) placed himself in front of the holy doors. Michael then removed his diadem, prostrated himself at the feet of the patriarch and confessed his crime against John Laskaris with a loud voice (something that neither Basileios nor John Tzimiskes, nor Michael IV had dared). Josephos read out a written statement that mentioned the sin again, but also its forgiveness. Michael repeated the act of repentance in front of every bishop, each of whom read out the same statement. The senate and the citizens participated by shedding tears and imploring god to be merciful. At the end, the emperor was allowed to partake in the eucharist, which signaled his rehabilitation into the community of the church.

Most interesting is the fact that Michael obviously began the ritual with the diadem (κάλυπτρα here means the diadem, see Reinsch 1996) on his head, which he then removed. Both *De cerimoniis* and *De officiis* agree that the monarch took off his diadem before moving into the nave; only when he was crowned he did actually wear it in church. The ritual described by Pachymeres actually resembles an (inverse) imperial coronation: Present were representatives of all the relevant power groups of the capital that also were witnesses of the investiture of a new ruler. The basileus removed the diadem personally; in this way it became clear that no formal deinvestiture, but a voluntary act of humility took place, which nonetheless pointed out that the emperor owed his crown to god. The decisive action of the ritual was the repeated, loudly proclaimed statement of forgiveness; as a new monarch was acclaimed as "worthy" (ἄξιος), the bishops proclaimed Michael Palaiologos purified from sin and thus worthy to rule. It is most unfortunate that Pachymeres doesn't include information wether or whence Michael received back his diadem.

The core of the ritual included a scenic *imitatio* of the Davidic penance. The exhortations of the prophet Nathan, and especially the confession before Nathan in *proskynesis* are known to be the dominant motifs that were used in Byzantine manuscripts to illustrate this story. Exactly these motifs were staged here: The prostrate Emperor confesses as a humble penitent his misconduct, and asks for forgiveness, the Patriarch exhorts and proclaims what is asked for. But it did not end here, the Emperor renewed the humble act in front of each of the bishops present, which in turn announced the forgiveness of his offense. By transforming the bishops from passive recipients into actors of the ritual, the emperor obligated them to demonstrate their unequivocal approval to the remission of his sin; probably the written document that specified the committed and forgiven transgression should also ensure greater liability (for some time, the lifting of the ban was commemorated regularly at the day of Hypapante, which also served to ensure that no one would forget it). A reference to the "record of debt" mentioned in the letter to the Colossians (Col. 2.14), which was torn through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and is frequently referred to in penitent prayers, is also conceivable.

The presentation will consist of a summary and conclusions about the outlined events and acts, which will also be supplied in a second draft of this paper.

Abbreviations

ANGELOV 2006 = Dimiter G. ANGELOV, The Confession of Michael VIII Palaiologos and King David, in: JÖB 56, 2006, pp. 193–204

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RICKELT 2011 = Lutz RICKELT, Die Exkommunikation Michaels VIII. Palaiologos durch den Patriarchen Arsenios, in: Michael GRÜNBART, Lutz RICKELT, Martin M. VUČETIĆ (edd.), Zwei Sonnen am Goldenen Horn? Kaiserliche und patriarchale Macht im byzantinischen Mittelalter. Akten der Internationalen Tagung vom 3. bis 5. November 2010, 2 vols. (Byzantinistische Studien und Texte 3; 4), Münster 2011, 2013, vol. 1, pp. 97-125



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Gesture and performance in Late Byzantium through the eyes of George Pachymeres: Michael VIII Palaiologos' post-coronation procession of 1258 in Nicaea and its political and ideological ramifications

Although over the years Byzantinists have showed strong interest in the study of court ceremonies and their relation with Byzantine imperial ideology, the functional aspects of imperial ceremonies in the context of Byzantine political life are still widely unexplored. An even less explored topic is that of gesture and performance in Late Byzantium.

Drawing an example from the very early years of Michael VIII Palaiologos reign (r. 1258–1282) I will explore how gestures and symbols were employed in order to display authority and power within the context of his first public ritual procession that took place in Nicaea right after his coronation in 1258. The imperial procession that was staged and performed by Michael VIII Palaiologos will be analyzed through the point of view of a contemporary historiographer, George Pachymeres, who is the only author that records the event. The aim is not only to shed light on a neglected aspect of Michael VIII Palaiologos' rise to power and his attempts to undermine the underage heir of the throne, John IV Laskaris (r. August 1258), but also to examine this imperial procession within the historical, political and ideological framework to which it belonged. Moreover, I intend to highlight the functional and symbolic connotations attributed to this post-coronation ceremony by the late Byzantine author, George Pachymeres, and examine the typology of his narrative style in relation to his authorial aims.

Overall, the above-examined episode of Michael VIII Palaiologos' ceremonial procession in 1258 reflects the changing realities of his time and provides considerable insights about the late Byzantine political thought and the way the Greek historiographical narratives perceived it.



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Depictions of Human Figures and Bodily Postures on Medieval Ceramics

It is interesting to observe that suddenly human figures were depicted on Medieval ceramic bowls and dishes, which were recovered until now in Cyprus, Greece, western Turkey and the Crimea. The majority of these vessels can be approximately dated between the late 12th/13th and the early 16th centuries. In this presentation it is my aim to explore depictions of human figures on Medieval pottery in relation to bodily communication, gender representation and distinction, as well differences in appearance through the use of clothes and objects in this period of time.

In Cyprus, for instance, these images of human figures were well executed in the 13th and 14th centuries with Byzantine elements and decoration techniques (imitating 'Incised Sgraffito Ware' and 'Slip-painted Ware' from the Peloponnese and Central Greece under Latin control; see Vroom 2014[2], 90-91 and 124-125), but they became more stylistic and abstract towards the 16th century - when we start to see a sort of Picasso-like though quite uninspired human depictions (Papanikola-Bakirtzi 1989; Vroom forthcoming, fig. 20). Before and after this period human figures are quite unknown on the Cypriot pottery.

It is clear that some iconographical elements on these ceramic vessels with human depictions are still unknown to us and need further study. More fundamentally, the gestures on the bowls from Cyprus - if they are real gestures - remain problematic. Leslie Brubaker rightly observed in her article on gestures in Byzantium that visual expressions of gestures 'had meanings to the Byzantines that are no longer blatantly obvious to us' (Brubaker 2009, 55). The same could be the case with the gesticulations on the Cypriot vessels; perhaps they had a totally different significance than our modern gestures. Indeed, the question is whether we are really dealing with gestures as we understand them. In fact, we do not see many distinguishable hand or finger gestures on the bowls, but perhaps rather changes in bodily postures which change over the centuries (Vroom 2014, fig. 7; idem 2015, fig. 25).

The use of a new ambiguous iconography on these portable ceramic objects remains intriguing. Surely, the vessels had not only utilitarian but also decorative purposes. We see a mixture, a melting of Byzantine Orthodox, Western European, Armenian, Eastern Christian and Islamic decorative motives from various parts of the Mediterranean and the Near East. These range from heraldic symbols and Western and Eastern elements of chivalry to Byzantine and Western romantic epic traditions, astrological and mythological images, symbols of Christian faith and scenes of a privileged courtly life (including hunting, drinking and dancing; see Wartburg 2001; Vroom 2014, figs. 9-17) .

After the 13th century the Cypriots came in contact with a new visual style for pottery decoration, which included the depiction of human figures in various body postures unknown to them. This new visual language (imitating examples from Port Saint Symeon Ware, a pottery type mostly made in northern Syria and south-eastern Turkey; cf. Redford 2015) was probably introduced by the influx of a heterogeneous groups of immigrants (including artisans) who came to Cyprus

since the late 13th century from the Syrian and Cilician mainland (Jacoby 1989, 173-174; Weyl Carr 2007, 105-106; idem 2009, 129 and note 10). This influx of immigrants with their Levantine expertise was mainly situated in the coastal areas, and Famagusta in particular (enhancing thus the closer commercial contact of this port to Armenian Cilicia) (Jacoby 1989, 146; Böhlendorf-Arslan 2004, 273-274, pls. 160-162, nos. 861, 862, 864, 874, 878; idem 2014, figs. 3, 7 and 12).

The archetypical - even stereotyped - human depictions surely transmitted new messages through their various bodily postures, which may very well be related to social interaction and new social configurations, to shifts in economic and political power, to the growth of a new shared taste, as well as to a cultural transformation and diversification of Late Medieval society in general (Schmitt 1991, 67).

This pottery seems to reflect a sort of supra-regional identity, representing a shared ideology and a common artistic ground based on the exchange of motives, styles and ideas. In this cross-cultural iconographical *koinè*, the Cypriot potters were easily copying, borrowing and merging elements from surrounding cultures. In doing so they developed a complex imagery on portable objects as a kind of non-verbal communication, the exact content of which we are only beginning to comprehend (Vroom 2011, 410-412). Major influences in this process were apparently the Italian-dominated maritime trade (through cabotage) and traveling craftsmen.

In addition, the objects, added attributes and clothes connected to the human figures on the Cypriot vessels tell - as social markers - an interesting story. Jugs and goblets made in glass, metal and earthenware of this period from Syria and Cyprus can be distinguished in similar shapes on the Cypriot ceramics (Vroom 2015, fig. 26). It is thus interesting to see how realistic the Late Medieval objects, added objects and garments are depicted on the Cypriot ceramics. It is interesting to explore this further, for instance in combination with related archaeological and art-historical evidence (Vroom forthcoming). When looking at a previously presented overview, we may distinguish in the Cypriot ceramics a gender distinction in objects, with differences between male and female associated objects throughout the centuries (Vroom 2015, fig. 27).

The bodily postures on the Cypriot vessels may thus help us to understand gender roles (whether or not unconsciously accepted by them – and us), which were emphasized by clothes and attributes associated to traditional male and female behaviour. The female way of dancing on the pottery seems to be a way of distinguishing oneself as feminine by ways of movement, with pleasure-bearing women spreading their arms out in a graceful manner (Burke 1991, 77 and note 21). In addition, the presence of 'elite' attributes, such as harmful weapons for the man *versus* harmless goblets for the women, seem to influence the way the figures perform certain bodily movements. However, it remains doubtful whether these images represent the realities of Cypriot society as they were. Perhaps the depictions show Cypriot realities rather 'as they were supposed to be'. In this perspective, the pottery would reflect the aspirations for new social values by the target group, that is to say, the customers who bought and used these vessels, and perhaps rather dreamed of knightly life than actually lived the courtly life.

It has been suggested that the human figures on the ceramic vessels stem from the literary or the oral epic or both (e.g., Frantz 1940-41, 9-13; Notopoulos 1964, 118-133). They could have as their prototypes epic illustrations or miniatures from illuminated manuscripts, going back to the 11th century, as has been mentioned above (Notopoulos 1964). From the 12th century onwards,

there starts to appear in Byzantine literature some romance novels, dealing with love stories between young couples according to the conventions of the western *amour courtois* (among these are *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* or *Libistros and Rodamni*) (Jeffreys and Mango 2002, 297; cf. Beaton 1996 and Jeffreys 2012).

In fact, these narratives undoubtedly belong to the era of the Crusades, reflecting the culture, customs and beliefs of that period of time. They show a knightly culture in a multicultural society with a blend of French, Italian, Greek and Islamic elements, with an emphasis on personal relations and with a growing interest in an individual's own feelings. In addition, they focus on regional history, especially on areas where the Franks were living.

According to the historian David Jacoby, by AD 1200 chivalry in the eastern Mediterranean 'had become an 'order' with its own specific rituals, morals and obligations shaped by custom, as well as by courtly literature' - this last one originating especially from Northern France. He suggests that from the 12th to the 15th century 'social contacts, the use of French as a common language and the circulation of books provided them with an intimate knowledge of social and institutional developments in the West and the eastern Mediterranean', leading ultimately to the renewal of knightly values in the East expressed visually through book illustrations and wall paintings (Jacoby 1986, 159; see also Jacoby 1984). The role of French Medieval literature in the diffusion of knightly values (such as jousting, dancing, hunting and hawking) is a subject that has already been picked up by Véronique François in combination with the human images on the Cypriot ceramics (François 1999). Nevertheless, we should not exclude the Byzantine literature (mentioned above) in this respect.

In assessing the artistic value of the human figures, we have to keep in mind that we are dealing with daily-life objects which permitted only a restricted repertoire. The potters and decorators were limited to a small area in the interior of open vessels (such as footed bowls with a small rim diameter) for cutting and painting the designs (Vroom 2014, fig. 1; idem 2015, fig. 4). In addition, these vessels were local products for a local market, so it was also the task of the potter or a middleman to relate to local customers who were using these bowls. Now, one can imagine that the local customer preferred to drink from a cup with the depiction of an image you like, or perhaps from a bowl that was given to you as a present.

In short, the mechanisms of taste and demand, of fashions in design and manners of consumption, were functioning on these ceramic objects. It is therefore very well possible that the potters were carefully copying images from incised depictions in silver ware (as in the case of the depiction of Saint George), from wall paintings, from coins or from illustrations in epic literature (Notopoulos 1964; Jacoby 1986, 169-172). In the case of some images (such as the portrayal of couples), for instance, it seems that these depictions were inspired by episodes in French Medieval literature and in Byzantine poetry.

Furthermore, we must not forget that these vessels were often found in archaeological contexts connected to graves. So, these bowls could have been used as religious gifts for important occasions during one's life time and later placed in graves as an accessory for the afterlife. Or perhaps they were used for burial and libation ceremonies and then placed in or around the graves (Vroom 2014, 182-184). It would be interesting to see what the connection was of these bowl burials in combination to the age and gender of the skeletons found.

My research on this group of pottery with human depictions is still on-going. In particular, I hope to be able to present more ideas about these human representations on ceramics in combination with funerary practices in the future. In fact, more study should be done on the relation of these bowls to the individuals found with them in the graves, and more study should be carried out to put these bowls in a wider ceramic repertoire using material from other parts in the Mediterranean and from the Islamic world (see Vroom 2014, figs. 9-17 for a first approach). This is probably not the last word said about these vessels, as they are truly cross-cultural objects full with rich enigmatic iconographical elements – including gestures or perhaps rather bodily postures.

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